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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000654

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E - MBEYZEROV  
PARIS FOR WBAIN  
LONDON FOR PLORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MA](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT ZAFY: MEASURED, BUT READY FOR  
CONFRONTATION

REF: A. ANTANANARIVO 642  
[B](#). ANTANANARIVO 643  
[C](#). ANTANANARIVO 634

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF DOVIE HOLLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: As the only former president currently in Madagascar, Albert Zafy has become the increasingly visible face of opposition to High Transitional Authority (HAT) President Andry Rajoelina's new government, announced on September 8 (ref C). In a crisp meeting with Ambassador Marquardt on September 11, Zafy presented the reasoning behind recent opposition moves in favor of a Malagasy military intervention, his hope to restart the failed Maputo Process, and his willingness to reignite confrontation should Rajoelina fail to respond. Although the opposition is currently united only in so far as they all seek a return to dialogue, the 84-year-old (but extremely robust) Zafy may be positioning himself as a possible successor to Rajoelina as President of the Transition, if his movement can gain traction. END SUMMARY.

LACKING CIVILIAN CONSENSUS, MILITARY SHOULD "ACCEPT  
RESPONSIBILITY"

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[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador Marquardt met with former President Zafy on the morning of September 11, just before the opposition movements were scheduled to gather at the Place de la Democratie, for the first time since April 2009. Zafy had met with French Ambassador Jean-Marc Chataigner the previous day, and appears to be styling himself as the leader of the opposition in the absence of Ravalomanana and Ratsiraka (who remain abroad, although the latter is free to return when he chooses). He was keen to hear Ambassador Marquardt's take on the current situation, before explaining his own recent actions in a calm, measured tone.

[1](#)3. (C) Zafy was the public face of a joint opposition statement on September 3, in which the three movements proposed that the military appoint the top three positions in the transition government (those of President, Vice President, and Prime Minister) as a means of resolving the post-Maputo II impasse. Rajoelina's speech on September 4, and the subsequent unilateral nomination of a new government on September 8, only hardened Zafy's view that Rajoelina has no intention of honoring the Maputo accords. With the civilian opposition unable to influence the intransigent regime, Zafy believes, the only option left is for the military to "accept its responsibility to unblock the situation". His view on September 3 was that this would be best accomplished with a consensual appointment of three military figures at the head of the transition. By September 11, it appeared that more forceful measures might be needed as the Rajoelina administration had made clear their

intention to remain firmly in control.

PRESIDENT ZAFY?

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¶4. (C) Prior to the Maputo II talks at the end of August, Zafy had been seeking only to head the Council for National Reconciliation, foreseen by the Maputo I accords. However, given recent developments, it now appears that he may seek -- or simply be willing to accept, if offered -- the transition presidency. He claimed that a contact within SADC had encouraged him to do just that during Maputo II, and that his contacts in civil society and provincial political organizations would prefer that he take a more active role in the transition. He was indirect on this topic but clearly left the door open to his taking charge if changing circumstances warrant.

¶5. (C) Zafy also relayed his concern for the French position, particularly about rumors that the French government had provided financial assistance to the HAT. Although Post does not believe this has occurred, rumors to that effect persist; Zafy said he had asked Chataigner this question and gotten a negative reply. Despite broad international condemnation of the HAT's unilateral attempt to create a "unity" government, Zafy asserted that Rajoelina may still believe that the international community will eventually come around and accept his government, "as happened in the 2002 crisis". He was pleased with the international -- and American -- response to recent events thus far, but is worried about the HAT's efforts to further entrench itself.

ANOTHER DEADLINE, WITH UNCLEAR CONSEQUENCES

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¶6. (C) COMMENT: Following a scuffle between protesters and security forces later in the day on September 11, and several arrests of opposition figures on September 12, a return to talks has been postponed yet again by PM Monja. Zafy announced on September 13 that the opposition would give Rajoelina until Sunday, September 20 to restart talks, but he did not outline any consequences of non-compliance, nor his plans for the intervening six days. Zafy appeared in the meeting to be committed to avoiding violence, although he has since spoken out in favor of demonstrations with or without the permission of city authorities. His supporters disassociated themselves from the pro-Ravalomanana demonstrators that confronted security forces that day, and -- with truckloads of soldiers parked around town to dissuade protesters -- there has been no further resumption of demonstrations since Saturday. On Sunday Zafy tried to convene his meeting of the three movements in the Senate building, but peacefully was prevented from doing so by military on orders from Rajoelina. They instead met and talked in a local hotel (septel).

¶7. (C) Zafy agreed that Plan A remains a return to the negotiating table, following the resignation of Rajoelina -- or the dismissal of Monja. Should the HAT cling to demands that they retain both top spots, Zafy will likely proceed with the formation of a parallel government, but that remains a difficult proposition. The opposition may have agreed that the Rajoelina/Monja tandem must end, but agreement on the composition of a parallel government would be tough on their new-found unity of purpose. END COMMENT.  
MARQUARDT